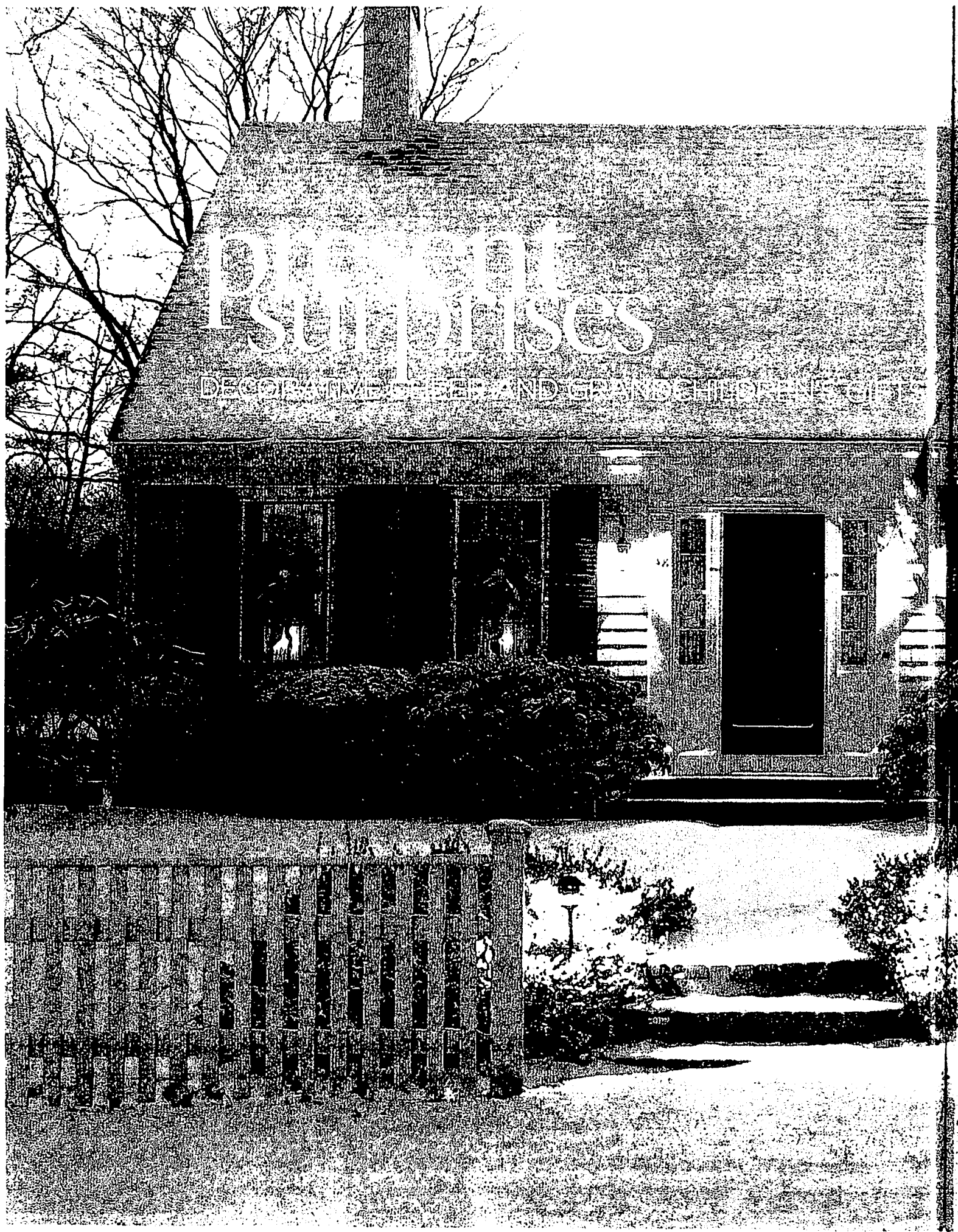


Gift Surprises

DECORATIVE TREES AND GRANDCHILDREN'S GIFTS



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ARE THE WONDERS OF A MASSACHUSETTS CHRISTMAS

HISTORICAL HOUSES



Interior designer Leo Barlow, who lives in a historic house in the Berkshires, is planning a Christmas celebration and plans to bring her grandchildren to the 1873 house in Berkshire, Massachusetts. She shares with us the story of the house. Above from left: Leo Barlow, her grandchildren Lisa, Grace, Jack, Michael, and Emily with Barlow's family. Below: A view of the house.

BY KRISSA ROSSEBUND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL PARTENIO
PRODUCED BY ESTELLE BOND GURAUNICK



A symphony of up-to-date garden colors is jubilant on floral and block-printed linen and striped ticking. Wall-to-wall cream wool carpeting unifies the fabrics and furnishings and hides mismatched floorboards underneath.

THAT OLD SAYING "CHRISTMAS IS FOR KIDS" IS ALIVE AND WELL

in the Duxbury, Massachusetts, home of Lee and Jack Barlow. Each year, their nine grandchildren—ranging in age from 10 to 23—anxiously await the surprise theme their grandparents have planned for them. It's one of the many Christmas traditions established in the house Jack and Lee have called home for the past 27 years. Come Christmastime, the house is a magnet for their three grown children and their families.

"We've done everything from Christmas clowns to angels to last year's Lion King theme," explains Lee, an interior designer in nearby Plymouth. "There were tickets at each plate for the day-after-Christmas performance in Boston, and I decorated the children's table with palm trees and wild animals. The kids love the memories—it's what they have long after they've forgotten what the gift was."

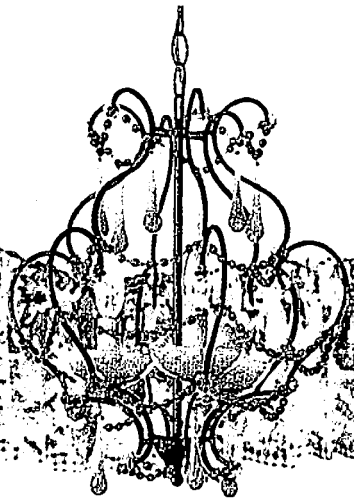
The same spirit that permeates the Barlows' bountiful seasonal celebrations once imbued their quest to honor the tradition and history of their coastal home, an 1833 antique Cape house that recently underwent an extensive renovation. Constructed by shipbuilder William Paulding, the house boasts all the intricate details of a ship, with structural beams pegged and fitted together. "When we tell guests that we've added rooms, they are always shocked and ask, 'Where?' We consider that the greatest compliment," says Lee. "The surprise lies in the seamless transitions between old and new."

The simple New England character of the house starts in the modest entry hall with walls covered in an English wallpaper

Below: The entry hall's historic six-panel front door welcomes entrants with merry chimes from a string of antique sleigh bells. **Right:** In the living room, a towering tree is bedecked with much-loved old ornaments.



Once a screened porch, the renovated kitchen welcomes the new day with morning light. The French doors are edged with laurel roping, and a fanciful French antique chandelier is accented with opaque blue glass drops and garlands.





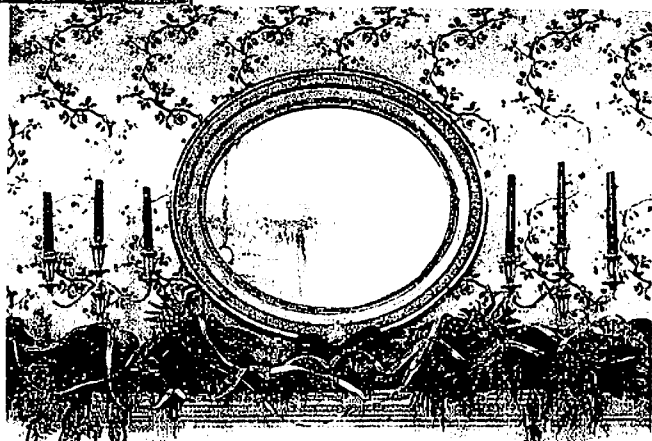
Left: The kitchen's snappy red-and-white palette blends easily with Lee's decorative holiday additions. Above: A stemmed silver compote holds glass raspberries. Lee also relies on fresh fruits and berries to extend the holiday cheer. Below: Apples, pears, and pineapples top a swag of greenery and pinecones on the dining-room mantel.

hand-printed in a green floral design that stretches up the wall. Lee's signature style combines vine-like motifs and spring green, which she loves for its light and airy look.

The straight-from-the-garden living room is alert with happy, uplifting hues. Striped wallpaper in cream, green, and blue works together with luxurious stationary silk panels in similar colors that gently puddle on the floor. The ivory camel-back sofa is given a Christmas spark with vibrant red pillows. And in front of the sofa, an antique Campaign table displays a bright red seasonal amaryllis, its base wreathed in green and red holly. But with additions during the holidays also come subtractions. Furnishings are rearranged, and one of the two fireplaces is concealed by a giant Christmas tree. "We love a great big tree, so losing one fireplace is worth it," says Lee. "Our tree isn't designed and coordinated; it's rather a joyful assemblage of meaningful ornaments that we've collected over the years."

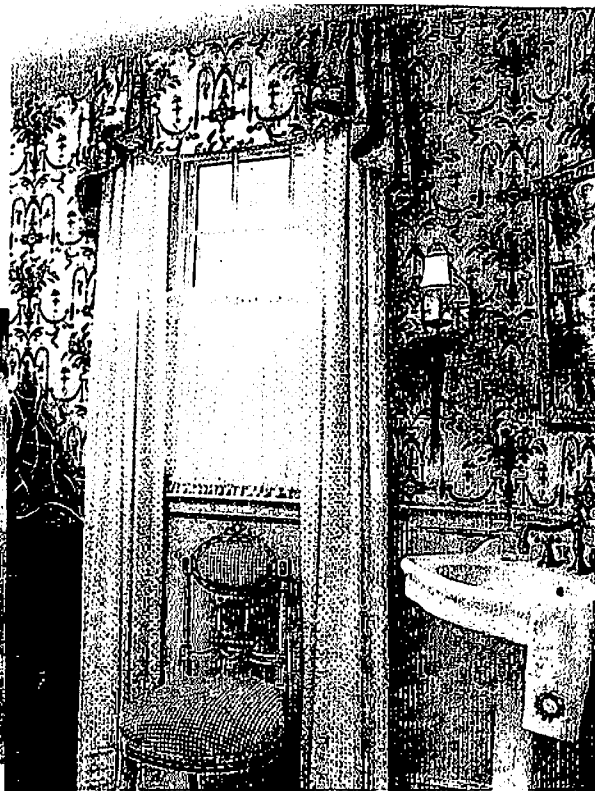
At the opposite end of the living room is a second seating area. A pair of wing chairs and an ottoman upholstered in a hand-blocked floral linen, a painted caned armchair, and a love seat mingle around a coffee table composed of a large papier-mâché tray set on a chinoiserie stand.

The spring green that graces various spots throughout the house continues in the dining room on another delicate vine-patterned paper that climbs the wall above the chair rail. The room's focal point is a traditional Duxbury mantel, named after the seaside town, with carved elements reminiscent of a ship's hull. The mantel is laden with greenery, berries, and fruit plus a pair of three-armed silver candelabras holding red holiday candles that flank an oval antique French mirror.





WITH OUR PRICELESS YEAR-TO-YEAR TRADITIONS INTACT,



Opposite: The fresh sprigs of greenery she uses to prepare her home for the holidays are a natural with Lee's primarily green palette.

Far left: An ethereal angel hovers above a bed of greenery on a living-room end table.

Left: Tiny green dots update traditional monotone dotted Swiss on the powder room's window. **Below:** Grandson Jack frolics in the snow with the family pooch, Bunker.



A north-facing kitchen inspired Lee's decision to blanket the room in bright white. The clean lines of a white beadboard island with a mahogany top are softened with arched glass-front cabinets. Backsplash tiles in a raspberry-and-cream trellis motif are mounted on the diagonal and repeat the same colors as the geometric floral wallpaper. Red gingham adorned with a playful black bobble fringe frames the window over the sink and cushions a pair of mahogany bar stools.

Across the room in the eating area, Lee uses fresh fruit for decorations. Tied together with ribbon, a pyramid of apples, holly, and a pineapple anchors the French table. Borrowed from the bar stools and kitchen window curtain, the gingham makes another appearance on the backs of reproduction host chairs and as the border on toile window panels. At the side of the table, a burled cherry French cupboard circa late 1700s holds Lee's collection of Majolica pottery.

A jewel box of a powder room is further evidence of Lee's penchant for leafy green and spirited patterns. The walls, in perfect harmony with traditional Christmas palettes, are painted below the chair rail in her favorite spring green, and papered

above with red-and-green swagged florals. A matching fabric was used for the window valance, carefully constructed and placed so as not to interrupt the flow across the walls.

The newest addition to the Barlow home is the sunroom, which is radiant throughout the day with natural light streaming in through a bank of tall windows. The needlepoint carpet depicts a variety of garden flowers—morning glories, tulips, chrysanthemums, and sunflowers. The fresh palette spills over onto a granny-apple-green sofa and a pair of French chairs upholstered in a plaid silk. Simple panels of soft green silk in a large check layer over linen sheers that are gathered into balloon shades at the tops of the windows.

While some of the grandchildren may have outgrown youthful anticipation, to Lee's delight they still love celebrating Christmas at their grandparents' house. "In future years we'll make minor adjustments to determine who sits at the grown-up table because we'll always need two tables," says Lee. "But other than that change, we plan to keep our priceless year-to-year traditions intact—this house will always delight at Christmas." ■

For more information, see sources on page 134.

THIS HOUSE WILL ALWAYS DELIGHT AT CHRISTMAS.

—HOMEOWNER LEE BARLOW